

A
LENTEN
GUIDE



WHAT IS LENT?

Lent is a 40 day penitential season (excluding Sundays which are always mini-Easter feast days) starting Ash Wednesday and ending with the Paschal Triduum (Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Holy Saturday).

These 40 days represent the 40 days of Jesus' temptation in the desert, Israel's 40 years in the wilderness, Noah's 40 days on the ark during the rain, and Israel's 40 days of waiting for Moses to return from Mt. Sinai.

Lent is a time of spiritual preparation and renewal, an invitation to meditate on the blessings God has given you in your baptism. Through baptism, we participate in the death and resurrection of Jesus, and by faith, daily die with our sins and rise with Christ to live a new life.

Lent is not a time "for doing things we never do otherwise." It is not a time for spiritual dieting.

Rather, like every Sunday, Lent is for intensifying things Christians do all the time. Lent intensifies our already held conviction that we have no power to save ourselves, that all our righteousness is rubbish, and that Christ alone saves. Lent is the Gospel proclamation that we are far worse sinners than we ever dared to imagine, and yet more deeply loved than we ever dared to hope. Observing Lent is not required to be "a good Christian." But rather it is a season all Christians are invited to freely enter into for our spiritual benefit and the benefit of those around us.

A PASTORAL ENCOURAGEMENT

Lent shows how much we need Christ.

Lent is an opportunity to follow Jesus who was led into the wilderness by the Holy Spirit for 40 days of prayer and fasting. This Lent at Faith, we are inviting the Spirit to lead us God's Word and be increasingly conformed to His image. This is particularly fitting this year, as throughout Scripture, plagues and pandemics were used by God to call His people to repentance and faith. Through baptism, and by returning to our baptisms in confession and absolution, God provides us with renewal, refreshment, and a fresh start.

Lent shows how much we need each other.

We often think of our faith as something personal, and while many of the practices of Lent are things that can't be done except by each person individually, however Christian faith is never practiced in solitude, but always in communion with fellow Christians. Together, by meeting together around the Word of God, we encourage one another and fulfill a purpose of church: to carry each other's burdens and to encourage them with the love of Christ. May we encourage each other this Lent in our individual participation in the death and resurrection of Jesus.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF LENT?

There are some themes that often arise when people describe their experience of practicing Lent. However, this list is not exhaustive, nor prescriptive. The way God deals with each person is unique to them individually, but also uniquely good for them.

RE-ORDERED LOVES:

The gentle harness of Lent is designed to loosen our unhealthy attachments to created things (including food, drink, and money) so that we may enjoy a deeper bond to the Creator. We learn to internalize and enjoy the love of Christ during Lent.

PURITY:

During Lent, we see the incompatibility between trusting God and our dabbling in idolatry (loving the world and pleasures more than God). We confess our sins and thereby take hold of the forgiveness that is ours in the Gospel.

JOY:

As we give ourselves to Him in our suffering, Jesus Christ supplies us with a lasting spiritual overflow and the consolation of the Holy Spirit solely through His Word. This is to be distinguished from a “spiritual high,” which cannot be sustained over time or during suffering. Easter Sunday and corporate worship during Lent grants us a taste of heaven.

RENEWED IMAGINATIONS:

As we progress through events of Ash Wednesday, the 40 days of Lent and the drama of Holy Week, we begin to see ourselves and the world not as they appear, but as they really are in Christ. The events of Jesus’ life, death and resurrection become for us a window into the new creation and the Kingdom of God which gives us a secure identity and invites us to participate in the Kingdom of God!

DEPENDENCE:

During Lent, we unlearn the lie that we are self-made, self-contained individuals. We learn to draw our strength from the life of God and the bonds of affection with our fellow Christians.

LENTEN PRACTICES

The three main habits during the season of Lent are **prayer** (our weapon against Satan), **fasting** (our weapon against the flesh), and **almsgiving**, or charity (our weapon against the desires of the world).

PRAYER during Lent focuses on what God reveals in His Word; our need for His forgiveness; thankfulness for His blessings; and petitions for those around us.

I want to spend more time praying for...

FASTING or giving something up that is a regular part of life is to remind us how completely we depend on the Lord. It is not dieting, as the focus of dieting often becomes my will-power. Rather, the focus of fasting is the Lord Jesus. The point is that when we give something up, we replace it with Jesus. For example, if a person chooses to not eat a meal, the time normally spent in preparation and eating would be spent reading and meditating on God's Word.

I want to fast from....

ALMSGIVING, or showing charity, such as giving money or doing something good for others is a way to respond to God's grace, generosity and love revealed so profoundly in Jesus' Passion and Death. For example, some people spend time volunteering or donate money they would normally use to buy something, like their morning coffee.

Our church has two ongoing projects during Lent:

Spring Cleaning Drive: We will collect personal health and hygiene products from our community for the local food pantry.

Members who have been blessed financially by the Lord are encouraged to give to our church's **Faith In Action fund**, which is set up to help families in need in our community.

I want to give to....

Our Lenten practices serve to remind us of our complete dependence on the Lord. If we find the practices of Lent harder to do than we thought, that just means we're recognizing how much more we need Him than we thought.

RECOMMENDED READING

The following booklist is very diverse (Lutheran, Anglican, Roman Catholic, and Evangelical) but highly beneficial if read with a discerning mind and humble attitude.

[Book of Concord](#) (challenging read). This volume contains the confessional documents of the Lutheran Church. They are true summaries of Scripture and are a useful road map for understanding the deeper ideas in Scripture. It is recommended that one start with the *Augsburg Confession*.

[The Screwtape Letters](#) by C.S. Lewis (easy read).

[On The Road with St. Augustine](#) by James K. A. Smith (challenging read).

[Confessions](#) by St. Augustine (very challenging, but worthwhile).

[Book of Family Prayer by Bishop Nils Laache](#) (easy daily devotional).

[Lenten Homilies on Genesis](#) by St. John Chrysostom (medium read). These eight homilies on the book of Genesis were delivered during Lent by the “Golden Mouthed” preacher around the year 385.

[The Spirituality of the Cross](#) by Gene E. Veith Jr. (medium read). Veith explores the topic of spirituality by presenting a true understanding of justification by faith, the means of grace, the two kingdoms, worship, and the church.

RECOMMENDED BLOGS or PODCASTS

[AllTheHousehold.com](#) is a blog for Lutheran liturgical living with many useful and thoughtful ways that historic traditions can direct our gaze toward our Lord Jesus.

[Issuesetc.org](#) A Lutheran podcast, and one of the top religious podcasts. The program features expert guests, expansive topics, while extolling Christ.

[gottesdienst.org/podcast](#) The podcast for the journal of Lutheran Liturgy.

LENTEN SCHEDULE

Shrove Tuesday - March 1 / Ash Wednesday - March 2

Tuesday 7:00pm Women's Bible Study at the Parsonage
Wednesday 5:30pm Meal
6:30pm Divine Service with the imposition of ashes.

Week of Lent 1 - March 6

Sunday 9:00am Divine Service | 10:15am Bible Study
3:00pm Bethany Lutheran College Choir Concert
Tuesday 6:30pm Mens' Bible Study at church
7:00pm Women's Bible Study at the Parsonage
Wednesday 5:30pm Meal | 6:30pm Vespers
Saturday 3-6pm Young Adult Fellowship & Bible Study at church

Week of Lent 2 - March 13

Sunday 9:00am Divine Service | 10:15am Bible Study
Tuesday 7:00pm Women's Bible Study at the Parsonage
Wednesday 5:30pm Meal | 6:30pm Vespers

Week of Lent 3 - March 20

Sunday 9:00am Divine Service | 10:15am Bible Study
Canvassing Begins for Spring Cleaning Drive
Tuesday 7:00pm Women's Bible Study at the Parsonage
Wednesday NO Vespers
Fri., Mar. 25 6:30pm Festival of the Annunciation Divine Service | Meal at 5:30pm
Saturday Pick-Up for Spring Cleaning Drive

Week of Lent 4 - March 27

Sunday 9:00am Divine Service | 10:15am Bible Study
Tuesday 7:00pm Women's Bible Study at the Parsonage
Wednesday 5:30pm Meal | 6:30pm Vespers
Saturday Young Adult Fellowship & Bible Study (location and time TBD)

Week of Lent 5 - April 3

Sunday 9:00am Divine Service | 10:15am Bible Study
Tuesday 7:00pm Women's Bible Study at the Parsonage
Wednesday 5:30pm Meal | 6:30pm Vespers

Holy Week - Week of April 10

Palm Sunday 9:00am Divine Service
Maundy Thursday 6:30pm Service: Triduum Day 1 - Service of Confession
Good Friday 6:30pm Service: Triduum Day 2 - Tenebrae Vespers
Holy Saturday 7:41pm (sundown) Service: Triduum Day 3 - Easter Vigil
Easter Sunday 9:00am Easter Festival Divine Service